

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business until 11 a.m.

The distinguished Senator from Vermont is recognized.

#### MEDICARE HOME HEALTH FAIR PAYMENT ACT OF 1998

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I am pleased to report to my colleagues that yesterday afternoon a tentative agreement on home health care was reached by negotiators from the House and the Senate. This agreement will throw a much needed lifeline to our Nation's senior citizens who rely on home health care to provide much needed health services within the surroundings of their homes.

Home health care is the cornerstone of the health care safety net for senior citizens. It spares them the dislocation of moving to a hospital or nursing home, and it spares the taxpayers from paying for such costly services when they are not really needed.

The administration has implemented reductions in home health care services that treat every agency exactly the same, regardless of whether the agency is efficient or wasteful. The result is that the most efficient agencies are being hit with cuts they cannot absorb. Vulnerable senior citizens in my State are on the brink—on the brink—of losing their vital services.

Under the proposal, payments to the older, low-cost home health agencies will be increased and an additional 15 percent across-the-board cut scheduled for next fall will be delayed for 6 months. That is the time when they say the proposed payments which will get us out of this mess will be available. Adoption of this bill will give home health agencies needed financial relief until a new prospective payment system is in place.

All we need now is for the administration to also agree to help our senior citizens who rely on home health care, as was wrapped into the omnibus bill yesterday. I call upon the President in the strongest way I possibly can to join us in saving hundreds and thousands of home health care services from being forced to cut back on critical services.

Today is a day of political spinning. The media will examine who won and who lost, what provisions are in and what provisions are out. We must take that time to make things right for senior citizens who need our help.

Over the last 8 months, I have been working as hard as I know how to find a solution for the crisis faced by our home health care agencies in Vermont. Our 13 home health agencies are model

agencies that provide high-quality, comprehensive home health care with a low price tag. However, under Medicare's new interim payment system, the payments to the agency are so low that Vermont seniors may be denied access to needed home health services. They are the lowest cost in the whole United States.

For the past 7 years, the average Medicare expenditures for home health care in Vermont have been the lowest in the Nation. However, rather than being rewarded for this cost-effective system, Vermont has been penalized by the implementation of the current interim payment system. In June 1998, Vermont's home health agencies projected the statewide impact of their current interim payment system was a loss of over \$4.5 million in Medicare revenues for the first year. These are nonprofit agencies in our little State. This represents a loss of over 11 percent on an annual base of \$40 million statewide.

Vermont is a good example of how the health care system can work to provide for high-quality care for Medicare beneficiaries. Home health agencies are a critical link in the kind of health system that extends care over a continuum of options and settings. New technology and advances in medical practice permit hospitals to discharge patients earlier. They give persons suffering with acute or chronic illness the opportunity to receive care and live their lives in familiar surroundings. Time and time again, Vermont's home health agencies have proven their value by providing quality, cost-effective services to these patients. Yet, time and time again, Federal policy seems to ensure that their good deeds will go punished.

The home health legislation is the product of a great deal of hard work by the majority leader, Senators ROTH and GRAMM, and Congressmen THOMAS and BILIRAKIS. I worked with them yesterday before we reached our conclusion. The signing of this bill will mark a victory for our State and also reflect a strong nationwide commitment to high-quality, cost-effective home health agencies such as those in Vermont.

I anguish as I wait today to know what will happen at the White House. I ask the President, call upon him, to make sure that they do not destroy this wonderful work that was accomplished yesterday to save our home health care system.

#### RECESS

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now stand in recess until 1 p.m. today.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 10:13 a.m., recessed until 12:59 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. GREGG).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi is recognized.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY 1999

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate receives from the House a continuing resolution, and provided the language is identical to H.J. Res. 135, except for the date of Tuesday, October 20, at 12 midnight, it be considered agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (H.J. Res. 136) was passed.

#### PRINTING OF A SENATE DOCUMENT

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 310, submitted earlier by Senators HELMS and BIDEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 310) authorizing printing of background information on the Committee on Foreign Relations as a Senate document.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 310) was agreed to, as follows:

S. RES. 310

*Resolved,*

#### SECTION 1. PRINTING OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION RELATING TO THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS.

The Public Printer shall print—

(1) as a Senate document a compilation of materials, with illustrations, entitled "Background Information on the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate (7th Revised Edition),

(2) in addition to the usual number, there shall be printed 500 copies of the document for the use of the committee, and

(3) the cost for printing this document shall not exceed \$5,825.00.

#### NATIVE HAWAIIAN HOUSING ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1998

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of calendar No. 713, S. 109.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 109) to provide Federal housing assistance to Native Hawaiians.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which